Modes of Resistance and Subversion in Mo Yan's Novels

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Introduction:

The present research study intends to undertake a close textual analysis of the selected novels of the Chinese Nobel laureate, Mo Yan (b.1955-) with a view to highlight the modes of resistance and subversion in his novels. He is the first official Chinese Nobel Prize-winning author for Literature in 2012 noted for merging "folk tales, history and the contemporary with hallucinatory realism." Though his original name, Guan Moye meant 'don't speak' in Chinese, he has spoken for his countrymen, the marginalized and the exploited. He began his literary career with the publication of a short story in a literary journal in 1981, and his breakthrough came a few years later with the novella *Touming De Hong Luobo*. He had created a folklore-inspired microcosm that documented both the past and the future of Chinese society and a unique literary world by blending narrative expression from the traditional Chinese literary arts with the avant-garde techniques. Most of his fictional works like *Red Sorghum* (1987), *The Garlic Ballads* (1988), *The Republic of Wine* (1992), *Big Breast and Wide Hips* (1996) *Sandalwood Death* (2004), *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* (2006), *Wa* (2009) and *Change* (2010) "have been judged subversive because of their sharp criticism of contemporary Chinese society."

His works have been rightly described as "bio-political narratives" depicting people and places deeply rooted in the soil and culture of China with abundant scenes of his hometown of Gaomi, a remote agricultural area, with the literary space of fantasy. He has thus opened a path from Asia to the world, in the process demonstrating the significance of Asian culture to the world. His strong nativist stance is clearly evident through his assertion: "It is meaningless to follow others. If everyone heads West, then I will head East." He is not merely guiding Chinese literature, but demonstrating the spirit to drive into the future the literature of Asia that has been bound by the stifling influence of modern Western literature and the weight of history and tradition. As Time Magazine explains, Mo Yan works his way around the edges of government censorship by using "the adroit subtlety of his magic-realist style." He has received numerous awards like Kiriyama Prize Notable Books (2005), Fukuoka Asian Culture Prize XVII (2006), The Man Asian Literary Prize nominee (2007) and the Newman Prize for Chinese Literature (2009).

The most important aspect in Mo's writings is the vulnerability of the poor peasants in the face of corrupt and incompetent officials. The picture of corruption co-exists with the picture of heroic fight of the peasants with the tame less soil and natural adversities. Mo focuses on the paradoxes of modern China and the unchanging demands of love, family, and duty. There are also other heterogeneous elements - an arranged marriage, a botched directive from central agricultural planners, and a drunk driver with government connections. All are woven into a coherent whole through the poetic vision of Mo Yan who easily peddles in realism.

One of his novels *The Garlic Ballads* embodies a quotation from Stalin in its *Preface* which is indicative of his ideological commitment as a novelist: "Novelists are forever trying to distance themselves from politics, but the novel itself closes in on politics. Novelists are so concerned with "man's fate" that they tend to lose sight of their own fate. Therein lies their tragedy." In many of his novels, he is the novelist of the countryside and may be called the Hardy of China. But while Hardy in his Wessex avoids politics, nearly all the eleven novels of Mo Yan are highly political. He depicts the violent and haunting picture of the rural society.

Objectives of the research:

This research study bases its argument and observations on the critical analysis of selected texts. It has the following major objectives:

1. To evaluate the substantial contribution of Mo Yan to the Chinese literary tradition through a close textual analysis of the chosen novels in terms of structure, style and themes, symbols and narrative techniques.
2. To examine and interpret the novels with a focus on the modes of resistance and subversive strategies employed by the novelist.
3. To relate the selected novels to the contemporary socio-cultural and political conditions of the Chinese society.
4. To investigate the prevalent values and traditions of Chinese society and its fictional subversion and condemnation achieved by the artistic skill, intellectual maturity and ideological commitment of the novelist.
5. To understand China's revolutionary political situation from the 1950s to the present Post-Covid scenario relating to the subject matter of Mo Yan's writings in general and the chosen narratives in particular
6. To study the emergence of contemporary China as a global power and wide acceptance of Mo Yan's writings after his achievement as the first official Chinese Nobel laureate.

7. To highlight the postcolonial and postmodern elements in Mo Yan's writings and his artistry in merging "folk tales, history and the contemporary with hallucinatory realism."

Hypothesis of Research:

Mo Yan has employed different modes of subversion and resistance in his writings with the intention of condemning the prevalent politics, corruption by the government officials and exploitation of poor peasants. He views the complex relations between fiction and politics through vehement criticism of the state whose coercive population control policies are responsible for murderous consequences. This denunciation is also aimed at the economic ultraliberalism that is complicit with the totalitarian inheritance in destruction of human dignity through the alienation and commercialization of the body. The complex symbolic structure of this work brings out the need for life itself to be rehabilitated in accordance with basic human rights and membership in the human community, and to be strongly defended against political attack and moral decay. Far from being an essentialist communitarian ethics, however, the bioethics proposed by the author offers the possibility of social reconstruction of the bios. There is a pointed reference to the traditional Chinese practice of assigning their children human body part names in the rural areas.

Scope and limitations of the study

The scope of this research work is limited to the critical exploration of the selected novels of Mo Yan. He shed lights of the peasant predicament and ethical, national problem for the development of nation. His novels contain satire, irony ethical powers and realism. The following novels are selected for this research study:

Red Sorghum **(1986):**

This novel narrates the story of the Chinese battling Japanese intruders as well as each other during the 1930s. Furthermore, it details the tragedy of the Chinese defending and preserving their culture through a series of flashbacks spanning three generations. It even inspired the development of an Oscar-nominated film directed by Zhang Yimou. It is a novel of family, myth, and memory, set during the fratricidal barbarity of the 1930s, when the Chinese battled both Japanese invaders and each other. It is narrated by a young man at the end of the cultural revolution who tells the stories of his father, Douguan; his grandfather, the most ruthless and infamous bandit and guerrilla commander in the region; and his grandma who fell in love with the commander when he raped her in the sorghum fields, only three days after her arranged marriage.

***The Garlic Ballads* (1988):**

In this master narrative, Mo Yan depicted a 1987 peasant riot against official corruption and malfeasance in the transition to a market economy. Through this powerful, fiercely lyrical story of a Chinese garlic farmer's revolt, Mo Yan uncompromisingly portrays the harsh realities of an existence difficult to comprehend. Garlic farmer Gao Ma aches with love for Fang Jinju, whose parents are using her as a pawn in an arranged marriage. Defying her two thuggish brothers and her father, who in the past has savagely beaten her, Jinju, pregnant with Gao Ma's child, runs away with him but meets a tragic end. The grief-stricken farmer is thrown in jail for his alleged role as ringleader of a farmer's riot-an angry mob has destroyed a government building to protest a county official's refusal to buy the garlic crop amid a surfeit. Gao Ma's fate is entwined with that of another imprisoned protestor, Gao Yang, who preserves his sanity through the love of his wife and blind 10-year-old daughter. Mo Yan fuses gritty realism, stunning imagery, acid satire, bawdiness, dream sequences, interior monologues, and flashbacks to the Cultural Revolution. His luminous prose lays bare the corrupt bureaucracy, grinding poverty and pervasive oppression borne by millions of inhabitants in the People's Republic.

***Thirteen Steps* (1988):**

Thirteen Steps is one of the popular novels of the Nobel prize-winning novelist, Mo Yan. It first appeared in 1988 in the literary magazine *Wenxue si ji* and later appeared in book form in April 1989. The novel's protagonist is a madman locked in an iron cage. He relies upon the audience (or listeners) to feed him chalk so that he can prolong his own life and spit out tales of the miraculous and inconceivable about the lives of others. Through these unreliable narrative bits and pieces, community histories are being reinvented, creating "a grotesque and unpleasant aura" as it critiques the excesses of China's capitalist development.

***The Republic of Wine* (1993):**

This is a satirical novel exploring the relationship and internal relation of peoples among Chinese people its cultural programme and its festival, food, fruit and drink. The tale is set in an imaginary Chinese province called Liquorland, where custom dictates the consumption of mind-boggling quantities of sundry fine liquors. Mo Yan fashions a complex, self-conscious narrative structure full of echoes and reflections. The novel grows progressively more febrile in tone, with pervasive, striking imagery and wildly imaginative digressions that cumulatively reveal the tremendous scope of his vision.

***Big Breasts and Wide Hips* (1995):**

The novel *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* tells the story of a mother and her eight daughters and one son, and thus explores Chinese history through the 20th century. Gender roles is a major and dominant theme in the novel big breasts and wide hips by Mo Yan .Gender roles involves the responsibilities, influences and power of the sexes illustrated in the novel .Mo Yan sets up a china that is dominated men who are quite masculine and even animalistic, who engage in war, rape, power, struggling and other unscrupulous activity. China is renowned for repression of women, but the novel dramatically reverses the roles and appearances of most of the major male characters, including the men character, Jintong.

***Sandalwood Death* (2001)**

This novel is a stirring love story and an unsparing critique of political corruption during the final years of the Qing Dynasty, China's last imperial epoch. It is set during the Boxer Rebellion (1898–1901)—an anti-imperialist struggle waged by North China's farmers and craftsmen in opposition to Western influence. Against a broad historical canvas, the novel centers on the interplay between its female protagonist, Sun Meiniang, and the three paternal figures in her life. One of these men is her biological father, Sun Bing, an opera virtuoso and a leader of the Boxer Rebellion. As the bitter events surrounding the revolt unfold, we watch Sun Bing march toward his cruel fate, the gruesome "sandalwood punishment," whose purpose, as in crucifixions, is to keep the condemned individual alive in mind-numbing pain as long aspossible.

***Pow!* (2003):**

The novel's protagonist is Luo Xiaotong, a village boy with a passion for story-telling. It is set in a temple, where Luo recounts the story of his life to an old monk. He describes the difficult circumstances of his childhood in the "Slaughterhouse Village," a fictional town in which the population is obsessed with the consumption of meat and where corruption is rife. The novel has been interpreted as an allegorical commentary on the state of contemporary Chinese society, though Mo himself maintains that he is merely a storyteller, uninterested in ideology.

9) *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out* (2006)

This best-selling novel is a story of hallucinatory realism, both contemporary and historical in subject matter. The story covers 50 years of history (1950-2001) after the establishment of New China in the novelist's hometown Gaomi County, Shandong Province.

Naturally, the plot contains major modern historical events, such as land redistribution, Peoples Commune, co-ownership, and Cultural Revolution. One unusual aspect of this novel is that it is narrated by an animal: at first, a donkey, then a pig, and finally, a dog, all of which are reincarnations of the protagonist Ximen Nao. Through this interesting set-up, Mo Yan depicts the lives of Nao, a landowner in Gaomi County, who is executed by firing squad during land reform; his wife and children living in Communist China after his death; and his grandchildren facing new capitalist China.

Wa (Frogs, 2009):

Mo Yan's next novel chronicles the sweeping history of modern China through the lens of the nation's controversial one child rule. The title of the novel 'Wa' was multiple meanings and connotations which Mo Yan uses to good effect, for "Frog" and "baby" Sound the same in mandarin. The doctor hates the croaking of frogs. The novel is a story about a man nicknamed 'Tadpole' who tells his Japanese mentor the story of his life; a life that was intertwined with that of his aunt, Gugu, a midwife in the ranks of the communist party who turned the state agent for terminating illegal pregnancies and her guilt-ridden conscience in not saving the life of Renmei, her favorite nephew's wife as she was terminating Renmei's second (and illegal) pregnancy. The plot spins around the influence of events and persons from Tadpoles childhood. However, the strength of this book lies in its substructures: the tension between duty to the state and duty to one's family, the limits of friendship and the possibility of love under impossible conditions.

Research Methodology and chapter scheme

The research work is an analytical perspective and interpretative in nature. It mostly deals with the novels collection of the Mo Yan. Its depend upon the textual analysis of primary and secondary sources having references to the novelists works, documents, reviews in journals and essays and magazines, reports, memoranda letters and interviews. The methodology advocated by the latest PLA handbook is followed for purpose of documents, notes, quotation, bibliography etc. used by the researcher. The tentative scheme of chapterization is as below:

Chapter I: Introduction

The first chapter introduces the Chinese literary tradition, the objectives, hypothesis, scope, significance, research methodology and limitations. It thus defines what exactly is the purpose and plan of the study.

Chapter II: Theoretical Perspectives

The traditional theories like Marxism and Feminism and modern perspectives like postmodernism, postcolonialism, the Subaltern and the Cultural Studies have been applied in the textual analysis of the selected texts.

Chapter III: Mo-Yan: A Bio-Literary Profile

This chapter offers a detailed introduction to the writer, his writings, his world-view and overall contribution to Chinese literature.

Chapter IV: Critical Analysis of the Selected Novels

The fourth chapter will be devoted to the critical exploration of the selected novels by Mo Yan. This analysis will highlight the major thematic concerns, narrative methods, language, style and The novelist's art of character-portrayal.

Chapter V: Modes of Resistance and Subversion in Mo Yan's Novels

The fifth chapter embodies the interpretation of the chosen narratives in the light of the modes of resistance and subversion in Mo Yan's novels

Chapter VI: Conclusion

This last chapter offers a overall summing up of the research work including findings and observations of the study.

Significance and Contemporary Relevance

The present study explores the complex Chinese society, its welter of continuities and criss-crossing trajectories through the critical analysis of numerous aspects of socio-cultural dynamics as embodied in Mo Yan's novels. It's also valuable for to gists of the peasant's predicament, the political corruption, mythical ideology as well as the food, the habitual activity in the Chinese nation. Consequently it intensifier the Mo Yan's novels explores the Chinese national social and cultural life.

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